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STATE FOR EUR/SE, NEA, AND PM; OSD FOR NSC FOR BRYZA. JCS
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TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS TU I2

SUBJECT: CODEL MURTHA STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF US-TURKISH
RELATIONSHIP; PRESSES FOR TURKISH INVOLVEMENT IN
STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS IN IRAQ

(U) Classified by Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Deutsch.
Reasons: 1.5 (B and D).

(U) Baghdad minimize considered.

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) Visiting Congressmen Murtha and Larson assured Minister of Defense Gonul and TGS CHOD Gen Ozkok August 19 that Turkey was one of the USG's best allies and that we were looking to Turkey to contribute to reconstruction and stabilization efforts in Iraq. Gonul and Ozkok said Turkey shared our interests in Iraq and argued that reconstruction was key to creating stability and security there. Gonul said the Turkish government was in principle ready to help on the stabilization force and commented that compared to March 1, the government and AK had enough power in Parliament where it will be easier to make the right decision. Ozkok confirmed that TGS had received the USG's responses to its questions and said the Turkish military would be prepared to begin "phase one" mil-to-mil talks soon. Once TGS completed its evaluation, it would make its views known to the GOT. The GOT would then make a decision and take it to Parliament. Both Gonul and Ozkok welcomed the CODEL's reaffirmation of USG's intent to fight terrorism globally, including the PKK/Kadek. Gonul and Ozkok argued that progress in Iraq would lead to progress in the greater Middle East and vice-a-versa. Gonul reaffirmed general support for the Middle East roadmap and agreed it was in Turkey's interest to work for a peaceful solution. End summary.

¶12. (C) Representatives Murtha and Larson, accompanied by staff members and the DCM, called on Minister of Defense Gonul and Turkish General Staff (TGS) CHOD General Ozkok. ODC Chief and A/Pol-Mil section chief also attended.

TURKEY REMAINS A VALUED ALLY

¶13. (C) Rep. Murtha opened by stressing that Turkey was one of the USG's best allies. In his 28 years in Congress, Murtha said there had been no better ally and stronger supporter of US interests than Turkey. The perception that Turkey was no longer a key US Ally was not true -- especially not in Congress -- where there is a strong awareness and appreciation for the positive role that Turkey is playing globally. Minister of Defense Gonul agreed on the importance of the US-Turkish relationship and said the two countries had shared the same destiny for many years. CHOD Ozkok observed that relations between the US and Turkey were deep-rooted and dated back to the Korean War. Turkey and US had continued this close degree of cooperation in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. On Iraq, Ozkok stressed that Turkey "obviously supported" the US and cited a number of examples to illustrate the point: opening Turkish airspace to US aircraft (including TLAMs), support for counter-terrorism initiatives and providing military evacuation capabilities for US soldiers in southeastern Turkey. Ozkok characterized Parliament's March 1 rejection of a motion to allow US troops to use Turkish soil to deploy to Iraq as a "peculiarity of the Turkish system," since a majority of parliamentarians had voted in favor of the motion. Ozkok argued that the use of Turkish soil was only one area of cooperation.

IRAQ: US NEEDS SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE FROM ALLIES LIKE TURKEY

14. (C) Murtha told Gonul and Ozkok that he had just returned from Iraq, where he had met with OCPA Amb Bremer and assessed the current situation on the ground. Murtha said that in his view, the USG had not been aware of the degree to which Saddam Hussein had let Iraq's infrastructure deteriorate. Murtha highlighted the electricity shortage and high level of unemployment as two of the key areas that needed addressing. He estimated that Iraq would face an annual shortfall of approximately \$18B between its GDP (\$35B) and what it was expected to take in from oil revenues and assistance from the US. Amb Bremer and the Iraqi leaders have made great progress thus far in a number of areas, but a lot remains to be done. While noting that the reconstruction and stabilization of Iraq was a monumental task that would take years to finalize and cost the US considerable a sum of money, the US was committed for the long haul and would succeed. Rep. Larson added that Congress was united in its support for the Administration's efforts to bring about stability in Iraq. Stability for Iraq translates into stability for the US, Turkey and the region. Larson added that addressing the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people and developing stronger ties with its neighbors were key to establishing a stable and secure Iraq.

15. (C) While stressing that the US would remain in Iraq as long as it takes to succeed, Murtha and Larson argued that cooperation from key allies like Turkey would be essential to quicken the pace of success. Murtha said Turkey was in a natural position to contribute militarily in terms of troops and economically in terms of reconstruction assistance. Murtha said that in his recent discussions with Amb Bremer in Iraq, Bremer had said that the US was prepared to support a number of Turkey's economic and reconstruction proposals. Both Gonul and Ozkok highlighted the experience and past track record of Turkish construction and oil refinery firms beyond Turkey's borders, including most recently in Afghanistan.

STRONG STABLE IRAQ IN TURKEY'S INTEREST

16. (C) Gonul and Ozkok said that a strong and stable Iraq was also in Turkey's national interest. Gonul agreed that Saddam Hussein did not utilize the wealth of Iraqi resources -- including some of the most intelligent people in all of the Arab world -- to develop the country. Saddam tended to focus all of Iraq's resources on enriching those close to him in the center of the country at the expense of the north and the south. As a result, after 1991, there were three different somewhat independent regions (the north, south and center) and a number of different tribes vying for power. In the north, tribes under the control of KDP and PUK took rather harsh measures against long-time resident Turkoman. On cooperating with the US, Gonul said despite the outcome of the March 1 Parliamentary vote, there is not a single person in Turkey who sympathizes with Saddam. The US always has supported Turkey and Turkey in turn wants to help the US succeed in Iraq. Iraq and the Iraqi people are also Turkey's neighbors, and there are families in Turkey with family members in Iraq.

17. (C) Ozkok said that a secure Iraq will help pave the way for the reconstruction of Iraq. He noted that the future of Iraq was also important for Turkey. First, Iraq was Turkey's neighbor. Second, Turkey and Iraq shared a long history. Third, a strong, stable Iraq whose territorial integrity remains intact will help ensure a stable peaceful Turkey. Ozkok said that Turkey remained committed to ensuring that an independent Kurdish state did not emerge in the north. At the same time, because the majority of Kurds are Sunnis, it was important that all of the Kurds not leave Iraq to ensure against the emergence of a Shia-dominated Iraq. Ozkok also argued that developments in Iraq will affect developments in other countries in the region. While recognizing the difficulties of establishing democracy in some countries, Ozkok said the security of Turkey is very much dependent upon the democratic nature of the governments in the region. Turkey will continue to work with the US in this area.

STABILIZATION FORCE

18. (C) Murtha said the US hoped that Turkey could contribute forces to Iraq to assist in stabilization efforts there. In order for us to get it right, Turkey needs to be with us. Without assistance from our allies and an "international face" on the stabilization force, the US will not succeed

quickly. Gonul said that in principle, the Turkish government is prepared to help, but the Turkish people have a number of questions: how long will Turkish troops be deployed in Iraq? What will be their mission? With the PKK/Kadek controlling parts of the north, how will Turkey be able to supply its forces in Iraq? Gonul concluded by saying that "this time" (as opposed to March 1), the government is no longer new and the AK Party has enough power in Parliament where it will be easier to make the right decision. Ozkok said that given the importance of a stable Iraq, Turkey will carefully form its views on whether to contribute to the stabilization force in Iraq. In order for Turkey to make the political decision, TGS sought clarification from the US on a number of issues related to the stabilization force. Ozkok said TGS recently had received the US responses and was in the process of studying them. Ozkok said that the Turkish military would be prepared to begin "phase one" mil-to-mil planning discussions with the US "soon." At the end of its evaluation process, the Turkish military would advise the government of its position. Once the government reached a position, it would present it to Parliament. Murtha said the more Turkey can contribute to stabilization efforts in Iraq and the more Turkey advises the US, the greater the prospects for success. Ozkok added that while Turkey may not have the most updated intelligence on events in Iraq, it does possess a strong understanding of the Iraqi people, a factor that could be of assistance to the US.

PKK/Kadek

¶19. (C) Reps. Murtha and Larson reaffirmed the USG's general commitment to fighting terrorism globally and specific commitment to ridding Iraq of all terrorist elements, including the PKK/Kadek. Murtha noted that the USG considered PKK/Kadek a terrorist organization and said the USG would continue to work with Turkey on this issue as long as it takes. The DCM added the USG remains committed to eliminating the PKK/Kadek safe haven in Iraq. Gonul welcomed the commitment and said Turkey had recently passed a re-integration law aimed at persuading PKK/Kadek members to lay down their weapons and return to Turkey voluntarily.

MIDDLE EAST ROADMAP

¶10. (C) Gonul and Ozkok argued that progress in Iraq would lead to progress in the greater Middle East and vice-a-versa. Gonul said that if you stop terrorism in Palestinian territories, it will help stop violence in Iraq. Murtha said that while this was a tough issue, he believed there was a glimmer of hope that progress could be made. The USG continued to look to Turkey to use its good relations with both sides to push for implementation of the roadmap. Gonul agreed that Turkey has good ties with Israel, including more than 20 defense-related projects in the works, and stressed that it was in Turkey's interest that both sides work for a peaceful solution.

¶11. (U) Congressmen Murtha and Larson were unable to clear on this message before they departed post.
EDELMAN